



HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

NEWS RELEASE

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: November 21, 2007
CONTACT: HFD Public Affairs, 713-495-7900

Cold Weather is Coming!

HFD Wants To Know: “Are You Prepared?”

With the colder winter months fast approaching, Houstonians will be turning off their air conditioners and turning on their furnaces, fireplaces and space heaters.

The Houston Fire Department offers these safety tips to help keep you safe and warm during the winter months ahead.

- Provide and insure you have working Smoke Detectors.
- Install smoke detectors outside sleeping areas.
- Test the smoke detectors and batteries regularly.

Space Heaters- Give Space Heaters their space

- Keep them at least 3 feet away from combustibles-walls, sofas and anything else that will burn
- Space heaters should always be placed on the floor
- Never leave children alone in a room with a space heater and do not let children adjust the controls or move the heater
- Open-faced heaters should have a proper screen and grates in place.
- Never operate a defective heater Provide adequate ventilation when using a gas space heater, opening a window slightly (one inch) to prevent carbon monoxide buildup
- Never overload outlets or breakers
- Don't hide cords under rugs or carpets. Placing anything on top of the cord could cause it to overheat and can cause a fire.

- Don't use an extension cord with the heater. If the cord is hot to the touch, turn off the heater and unplug it!
- Electric heaters permanently installed in the wall or ceiling should have lint and dust removed regularly. Lint and dust will burn!
- Have your heating system professionally inspected and serviced every year Install a Carbon Monoxide detector near every sleeping area of the home, the same as you would a smoke detector, if you use gas or a fireplace for your heating If you use a gas space heater, light the match before you turn on the gas. This avoids the risk of flashback caused by accumulating gas

According to Houston Fire Department statistics, about 100 fires every year are due to faulty furnaces or space heaters Fireplace and Chimney Safety- Clear the area around the fireplace and chimney.

- Debris too close to the fireplace could cause a fire. Check the flue for obstructions like bird nests. Trim any overhanging branches or large trees near the chimney, to give a minimum of 10' distance from the chimney.
- Always use a fireplace screen . Use a glass or metal screen in front of your fireplace to prevent sparks igniting nearby carpets or furniture.
- Never overload the fireplace with too many logs. Don't use the fireplace as an incinerator, and never burn garbage, Christmas trees, or piles of paper. Keep a fire extinguisher on hand. See that the extinguisher is in good working order and that all family members know how to operate it.
- Never leave fire unattended! Be sure the fire is extinguished before you go to bed. Read and follow the label when using firelogs.
- Dispose of hot ashes in covered metal containers, placed outside in a non-combustible area (i.e. free from leaves, combustible overhangs, etc.)
- Keep your fireplace in good working condition. Have your fireplace inspected and cleaned annually by a certified chimney sweep.

For more information and tips visit www.houstonfire.org